

1.1 Project Overview

Background: The Third Ward to Main Street Connectivity Project is a collaborative, transportation initiative to link Houston's Third Ward community with the Main Street Corridor and light rail system. This project will build upon and leverage existing and future planning, transit, redevelopment, and other revitalization activities of the Third Ward Redevelopment Council ("TWRC"), OST/Almeda TIRZ, the Main Street Coalition, METRO, Texas Department of Transportation ("TxDOT"), and the City of Houston. The project will focus on improving and creating essential east-west transportation and pedestrian connections between the Main Street Corridor, Third Ward neighborhoods, and institutions.

This initiative will have a major influence on the future vitality of Third Ward by significantly improving the physical appearance of the neighborhood, creating the framework for increased economic activity, and providing for future stability by constructing transit related physical improvements. This will most likely result in the attraction of additional reinvestment to the Third Ward neighborhoods. This project will have a far reaching effect in the Third Ward community by enhancing and improving transit, pedestrian and alternative transportation linkages between the Main Street corridor, the future METRO light rail system, and the surrounding neighborhoods. The design proposals contained within these guidelines will provide community leaders with an important key to unlocking job opportunities within the Main Street Corridor as well as opening up the Third Ward neighborhood to the rest of the City of Houston and to the local institutions of higher learning.

Designated Corridors: The TWRC's Transportation Committee, in conjunction with The City of Houston Planning and Development Department, has identified Blodgett Street, Elgin Street, and Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail from Main Street to Scott Street as the corridors to be addressed by this project. These corridors were selected because they lack direct east/west transit connections in the corridor study area.

The aim of the project is to link residents of the Third Ward to the Main Street rail line via three streets, Elgin, Blodgett, and Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail ("OST"). Blodgett Street will receive actual improvements with sidewalks, lighting, street furniture, etc. Elgin and

Holcombe/OST will receive new streetscape designs, and ultimately, additional grants will be sought to beautify those areas in the near future.

While this study does not include a transit use analysis, existing routes in the study area were reviewed so as to identify areas that are not adequately served by the current transit system. This initiative will develop urban and streetscape design recommendations that will link current and future transit stops. The Transportation Committee of the TWRC, with support from the City of Houston, will continue to lobby METRO to expand its transit system coverage within Third Ward to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Project Funding: This collaborative transportation and land use planning initiative is funded in part by a **\$2.4 million** grant from the Federal Highway Administration's Transportation and Community Systems Preservation Pilot Program ("TCSP"). This grant represents the third consecutive TCSP grant awarded to the City of Houston for the Main Street Revitalization Project. In-kind contributions will be made by the City of Houston, Third Ward Redevelopment Council, OST/Almeda TIRZ, METRO and other organizations.

The above mentioned funding sources have provided the professional services fees necessary to develop the urban design guidelines and streetscape designs for the three designated corridors. In addition, approximately \$1,800,000 has been allocated for specific roadway right-of-way enhancement projects along the Blodgett Street Corridor. Additional funding sources need to be identified by community stakeholders for additional improvements along Blodgett, Elgin, and Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail.

Steering Committee: The Transportation Committee of the TWRC was designated as the Project's Steering Committee to offer guidance throughout the planning, design and engineering process. All seven of the members of this committee live or work in Third Ward and are knowledgeable of the community's transportation needs. The Steering Committee has been working closely with the Houston Planning and Development Department for over a year to develop the scope of this project.

Members of the Committee:

- **Kent Hadnot**, Executive Director of TWRC
- **Ernie Atwell**, TWRC
- **Theola Petteway**, Executive Director OST/ Alameda TIRZ and Third Ward Community Cloth
- **Dr. Carol Lewis**, Director, Texas Southern University Center for Transportation
- **Tanya McWashington**, METRO
- **C.C. Lee**, Stoa International Architect
- **Wendell Simpson**, Development Consultant
- **Paul Charles**, Neighborhood Recovery CDC

Information is available on the City of Houston's Website for the Third Ward Connectivity Project: [http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/departme/planning/projects/third ward/home.html](http://www.ci.houston.tx.us/departme/planning/projects/third%20ward/home.html)

Technical Advisory Committee: An additional committee has been set up by the City of Houston and is led by the Consultant team. This Committee will meet periodically for the duration of the project. The Committee's purpose is to work with representatives from the TxDOT, Midtown TIRZ, METRO, City of Houston Public Works and Engineering Department, City of Houston Parks and Recreation Department, University of Houston, Texas Southern University, Trees For Houston, and other organizations in order to coordinate the design proposals of this project with those of other planning, design, and redevelopment activities that are under way or planned in and around Third Ward.

PROJECT CONTACTS

City of Houston - Planning and Development Dept.
611 Walker, 6th Floor
P.O. Box 1562
Houston, TX 77251-1562
Phone: 713.837.7701
Website: www.houstonplanning.com

- **Patricia Rincon-Kallman**, Project Director, Assistant Director of Long Range Planning
- **Jennifer Ostlind**, Administration Manager

- **Janie Munoz Sanchez**, Planner Leader
- **Renissa Garza Montalvo**, Project Manager
- **David Manuel**, Senior Planner

Third Ward Redevelopment Council

- **Kent Hadnot**, Executive Director
5445 Alameda Rd., Ste. 503
Houston, TX 77004
Fax: 713.523.4489
Phone: 713.523.3233
Email: kenthadnot@hotmail.com
Website: <http://www.greaterthirdward.org/>

This project is in the following Council Districts:

- **Ada Edwards - District D Council Member**
Email: districtd@cityofhouston.net
Phone: 713.247.2001
Fax: 713.247.2196
- **Carol Alvarado - District I Council Member**
Phone: 713.247.2011
Fax: 713.247.3322
Email: districti@cityofhouston.net

CONSULTANT TEAM**Lead Consultant:**

M2L Associates, Inc.
Planners And Landscape Architects
Michael Mauer, ASLA
Phone: (713)722-8897
Fax: (713)722-8048
Email: mmauer@M2L.NET

Other Consultants:

Archi-technics/3 Inc., *Architects*
SLA Studio Land, Inc., *Landscape Architects*
PTI Engineers, *Civil Engineers*
Landtech Consultants, Inc., *Surveyors*

1.2 Project Scope/Purpose

The Third Ward to Main Street Connectivity Project will establish a blueprint for the future right-of-way improvements along Elgin Street, Blodgett Street, and Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail from Main Street to Scott Street. This project will link three significant corridors in the northern, central and southern sections of Third Ward to Main Street.

M2L Associates Inc. was selected, through a competitive request for qualification process, to provide urban design guidelines and streetscape plans for the Elgin, Blodgett, Holcombe/Old Spanish Trail corridors. The guidelines and streetscape plans are intended to help promote and encourage pedestrian activity to and from existing and future transit facilities by enhancing the pedestrian environment through attractive improvements.

The project consists of four phases:

Phase I: August through September 2002

Public Input

(Elgin, Blodgett, Holcombe/OST)

Phase II: October 2002
through January 2003

Urban Design Guidelines**Streetscape Designs**

(Elgin, Blodgett, Holcombe/OST)

Phase III: March through June 2003

Engineering and Design

(Blodgett only)

Phase IV: August through December 2003

Construction Implementation

(Blodgett only)

This project addresses improvements in the public right-of-way only.

